The Gender Dimensions of Environmental Change

An Exploration of the Experiences and Perceptions of Rural Men and Women in Zimbabwe

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Development Studies at Massey University, Manawatu, New Zealand

Submitted by

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Abstract

Processes of environmental change have taken place for centuries both as a result of natural variability and anthropogenic forces. As a concept however, environmental change continues to be used narrowly to refer to environmental changes which are biophysical in nature, and mostly those with global precedence. In recent times incidences of environmental change have become more complex as new patterns of change are threatening the livelihoods of those living in developing countries, undoing many development gains. As such, there is an increasing desire to understand the implications of environmental changes, particularly for those whose livelihoods are natural resource dependent, many of whom live in rural areas, and many of whom are poor. Despite this growing interest, rural people and especially the rural poor are little seen or heard; their environmental change experiences are thus misunderstood, and solutions proposed do not take into consideration the local context or experiences. There remains also a normative perspective which positions women as automatically vulnerable to environmental change, specifically vis-à-vis men. In doing so women’s experiences of environmental change are homogenised and men’s experiences are rendered invisible.

Drawing on the case of Zimbabwe this study critically considers the experiences and perceptions of rural men and women to environmental change so as to ascertain gendered impacts and differential vulnerabilities. To capture fully the subjective lived experience of both men and women to environmental change, this study lends itself to qualitative research. Thus research methods such as semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and gender analysis are central to the methodology.

In terms of findings, this study argues against looking at environmental change as a technocratic subject accessible only from a global frame and accessed only by a technocratic few, proposing that the people experiencing environmental change at a local level should determine the environmental changes of communal concern. This study also highlights the importance of understanding the vulnerabilities of rural men and women within a well-conceived notion of context, taking into account rural disadvantage resulting from colonialism, and the current Zimbabwean crisis.
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### Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEZ</td>
<td>Agro Ecological Zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMI</td>
<td>Body Mass Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAMPFIRE</td>
<td>Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF</td>
<td>Conservation Farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>Conference of the Parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPU</td>
<td>Civil Protection Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPR</td>
<td>Common Property Resource</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMA</td>
<td>Environmental Management Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESAP</td>
<td>Economic Structural Adjustment Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENSO</td>
<td>El Nino Southern Oscillation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAD</td>
<td>Gender and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCM</td>
<td>Global Circulation Model</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEC</td>
<td>Global Environmental Change</td>
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<tr>
<td>GHG</td>
<td>greenhouse gas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMB</td>
<td>Grain Marketing Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOZ</td>
<td>Government of Zimbabwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAF</td>
<td>Harvard Analytic Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KII</td>
<td>Key informant interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDC</td>
<td>Movement for Democratic Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MET Dept.</td>
<td>Meteorological Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>metric tonnes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEWU</td>
<td>National Early Warning Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NR</td>
<td>Natural Resource</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRM</td>
<td>Natural Resource Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSSA</td>
<td>National Social Security Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVAC</td>
<td>Orphans and other vulnerable children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRA</td>
<td>Participatory Rural Appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RA</td>
<td>Research Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SADC</td>
<td>Southern African Development Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goal</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDL</td>
<td>Sexual division of labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSI</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNCED</td>
<td>United Nations Conference on Environment &amp; Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>UDI</td>
<td>Unilateral Declaration of Independence</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNFCCC</td>
<td>United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIDCO</td>
<td>Village Development Committee</td>
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WAD  Women and Development
WCED  World Commission on Environment and Development
WED  Women, Environment and Development
WFP  World Food Program
WID  Women in Development
ZANU PF  Zimbabwe African Union – Patriotic Front
ZCTU  Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZDERA  Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act
ZELA  Zimbabwe Environment Law Association
ZIMSTAT  Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency
ZWD  Zimbabwe Dollar